



**CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
parks and recreation**

A-1

10/28//08

**Board of Park Commissioners
Special Meeting
Minutes**

Thursday, October 9, 2008
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Parks & Recreation Main Office
401 N. Morton St.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Carter at 11:35 a.m.

Board Present: John Carter, Les Coyne, Joe Hoffmann, Jane St. John

Staff Present: Mick Renneisen, Judy Seigle, Cheryll Elmore, Julie Ramey, Marcia Veldman, Paula McDevitt, Becky Barrick, Bradley Drake, Dave Williams

A. FARMERS' MARKET – WHERE WE ARE

Saturday Market:

Ms. Veldman addressed the Board and stated that there are basically three types of vendors that vend at the Saturday Market: 1) Art Fair vendors (30 spots); 2) Prepared Food vendors May-Oct (6 spots); 3) Farm vendors (145 contracts). She stated that the Market has grown substantially in the past ten years with 89 rented spots for August Saturdays in 2008 compared to 58 rented spots for August Saturdays in 1997. She added that while there are 145 contracts signed, typically about 60 vendors show up each Saturday and about three to four Saturdays each year more than 100 spaces are filled. Customer attendance also continues to increase with about 15% higher attendance in 2007 over 2006 and 2008 is on schedule to see an increase of about 20% over 2007 attendance numbers. The weekly entertainment continues to be popular with over 14 different events offered this year.

Tuesday Market:

The Tuesday Market underwent several changes in 2008 including relocating to 6th and Madison (next to Bloomingfoods) and the addition of weekly entertainment. This change of venue attributed to nearly doubling the customer attendance and increased the weekly vendor attendance from ten to 15.

Homegrown Indiana Farm Tour:

The Homegrown Indiana Farm Tour was offered for the first time this year to help “connect” Market customers with Market vendors. This tour was so popular that it filled within a few days of being made public. In 2009 three tours will be offered. Four members of the Farmers’ Market Advisory Council were active in the farm tour planning and attended the tour.

Other Markets in the Area:

Ms. Veldman stated that, while there are many farmers’ markets offered in the area, the Bloomington Community Saturday Farmers’ Market remains the primary regional market with no real competition.

B. WHERE WE’RE HEADED IN THE NEAR TERM

Ms. Veldman stated that she is eager for the completion of the B-Line Trail. However, with the addition of the new trail, changes in the Market layout will need to occur in order to ensure the safety of the people using the trail and the safety of the customers. In its current layout, early exit vendors are located along the west side of the Market

allowing them access to 8th Street so they can exit the market without interfering with customer and vendor traffic. However, with the addition of the B-Line Trail, staff is now suggesting that 8th Street traffic should be blocked to just west of the trail.

Possible alternatives to blocking 8th Street include moving prepared food vendors to the plaza and moving “info alley” to 8th Street. It was also suggested that early exits be discontinued.

Mr. Williams suggested offering closer parking so early exit vendors could “cart” their produce out to their cars. But made it clear that the vendors, not staff, would be responsible for carting their produce.

Mr. Coyne stated that many vendors have an entitlement or ownership mentality that needs to be addressed. He suggested a “bidding” system for prime vending sites.

Ms. Veldman stated that the current point system allows vendors with the most points to choose first what vendor site they want. Most long-time vendors choose the same spot each year because they like that continuity and feel customers begin to identify those sites with the vendors.

The Board suggested that staff should increase fees by at least 10% over the next two years.

Ms. Veldman stated that the fees were increased by 25% in 2008.

Mr. Hoffmann stated that price differentials for prime and non-prime sites would be ideal, but with very little moving based on location, differential pricing doesn’t seem feasible.

Mr. Renneisen stated that the Department increases the value of the Market each year by investing in it. In return, vending sites need to be priced appropriately. He feels that the current prices are low in comparison to the return.

Mr. Hoffmann asked, in general, what the relationship is between staff and vendors.

Ms. Veldman stated that the vendors have a generally positive impression of management. Farm vendors are very independent and have a general dislike of bureaucracy. She feels as though staff has worked hard to develop a trust and rapport with the vendors and feels it is important that not be compromised.

Mr. Hoffmann stated that because of the relationship that exists between staff and vendors, any controversial changes made to the Market should be communicated to the vendors by the Board. He adamantly agrees with staff that the 8th Street access should be closed and that it should be communicated as a policy shift and directive of the Board and not communicated as being negotiable by vendors.

Ms. St. John stated that there is much to be said about making changes in two phases and staff should be careful about what is negotiable by vendors and what is communicated as a directive of the Board.

Mr. Drake expressed his concern that the staff and Board not overlook the fact that it is, in part, the vendors and customers that have made the Market the success it is today. It is the vendors that return year after year and provide such high quality produce and consistent service that has attributed to its success. He doesn’t want their value to the community and the Market overlooked.

Mr. Coyne added that the Board understands the delicate nature of the Market and the relationship between the vendors and the customers and the Board certainly doesn’t want to interfere with that relationship.

Mr. Hoffmann added that the relationship part is the most important part of success of the Market! However, policies must be made in spite of this relationship and the Board is willing to accept responsibility for communicating those policy changes to the vendors.

Limiting Peak Season Non-Market Related Events:

Ms. Veldman stated that it has been difficult to regulate entertainers that just show up on Saturday mornings (buskers). They tend to interfere with traffic flow especially when they set up in crowded locations. She added that

it has been the goal of staff to regulate these buskers as little as possible but they do create some conflict in areas, especially on busy Saturdays.

Mr. Renneisen stated that this issue is being addressed at the City Administrative level. Changes to ordinances to regulate itinerant merchants licensing and limit busking are in development.

Vendor Diversity:

Ms. Veldman stated that the Market has slowly moved forward with making the Market more diverse by adding prepared food vendors. She asked the Board about the possibility of adding a wine vendor. She also discussed the new Middle Way initiative, the incubator kitchen, and how it might fit in at the Market as well.

Mr. Coyne stated that he prefer the incubator kitchen be designated as a prepared food vendor in order for staff to maintain some level of control.

Ms. Veldman stated that she would like to see special events limited to the slower months of June and July and would like to limit the offerings to City-related events. She suggested moving the Breast Cancer Awareness walk to another site. This event has grown so much that their participants are taking too many parking spaces and there are too many people for the two events to co-exist.

The Board agreed that events should be limited to City-sponsored events and the Breast Cancer Awareness event should be relocated.

C. WHERE WE'RE HEADED IN THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS

Opportunities for Growth

Ms. Veldman stated that she feels there are many opportunities for future growth with the Market within the next 3-5 years. She added that for many customers and vendors the Market has become more and more valuable and has become more of a necessity than a luxury.

Ideas for future expansion include:

- Offering the Market other days of the week
- Working more closely to complement other local Markets
- Extend Saturday hours
- Explore the possibility of closing off a portion of Morton Street and extend vendors to the street

Mr. Hoffmann stated that he is not opposed to “growing” the Market as long as the culture remains similar to its current mission.

D. CRITERIA FOR AN ACCEPTABLE APPLICATION

Ms. Veldman asked the Board how they would like to see staff proceed with the peach vendor whose contract was terminated in 2008 should he reapply in 2009.

Mr. Renneisen asked Ms. Veldman if she thought he would be able to comply with the Market guidelines that he originally violated.

Ms. Veldman responded that it is difficult to know because he wasn't keeping the logs and documentation that he was asked to provide initially.

Mr. Hoffmann stated that he felt the rules for perennials changed during the conflict and he was uncomfortable banning Mr. Biltz from vending permanently. He feels if Mr. Biltz reapplies and meets the criteria, then he should be reinstated but staff must insist that he follow their directives to ensure that he complies with the guidelines.

Ms. St. John asked if it is routine for vendors to be scrutinized and for farm visits to be made.

Ms. Veldman responded that, while it is not routine, the vendors **MUST BE REGULATED!** If a complaint is made or suspicions arise, the staff does investigate. While no farm visits have been made this year, they typically do at least one visit per summer season.

Mr. Hoffmann recommended that staff allow Mr. Biltz to reapply for the 2009 season and let the advisory council make a determination. However, should his application be approved, he should be granted a “zero tolerance” for non compliance.

E. SALE OF ALCOHOL AT MARKET AND OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS

Ms. Veldman stated that she has been approached by several local wineries expressing an interest in selling wine at the Market. She stated that Indiana recently passed legislation that allows wine to be sold at Farmers’ Markets as long as they are run by non-profit groups (including municipalities) and they follow all State laws regarding the sale of alcohol and the following three conditions: 1) No open containers; 2) No sampling; 3) No selling by the glass. She added that there are several Markets around the state that allow wineries to vend including the Bloomington Winter Farmers’ Market and it has proven to be quite popular with customers.

Mr. Hoffmann asked if local breweries were also allowed to sell at markets and if so, would we offer the same opportunity to local breweries.

Ms. Veldman stated there probably is no local interest but would keep her options open to breweries as well.

Mr. Hoffmann stated that he would prefer the wineries and breweries be local, preferably located in Monroe County.

Ms. Veldman stated we could conceivably receive three to four applications with the potential to devote two spots.

Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to authorize Board approval to sell alcohol (beer and wine) at the Farmers’ Market subject to all state laws and authorizes the Administrator to pursue further authorization. Ms. St. John seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Ms. Barrick addressed the Board and stated that she would like to propose that beer and wine be available for purchase at a few select events beginning in 2009. More specifically, she is hoping to hold a fall festival, similar to Oktoberfest, that would draw a larger crowd that would stay for a day-long event. She added that additional security and separate event permits would be added to help manage the event.

Mr. Coyne stated that he is supportive of this proposal.

Mr. Hoffmann added his preference for local breweries/wineries.

Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to approve the sale of (local) beer and wine at the 2009 fall event subject to all state laws and authorizes the Administrator to pursue further authorization. Ms. St. John seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judy Seigle, Secretary Board of Park Commissioners